

# How absentee voting works in Minnesota

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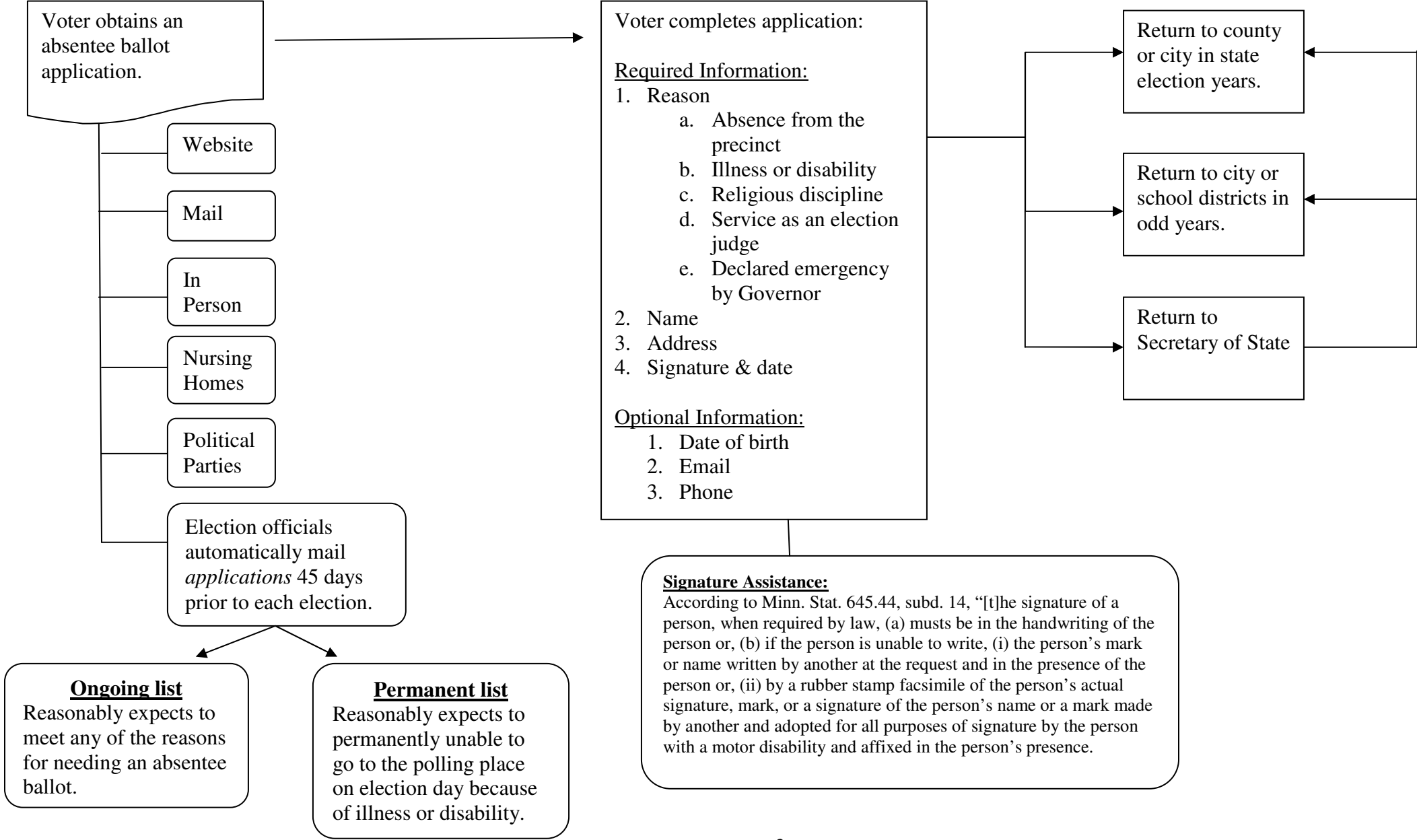
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Following the U.S. Senate recount and election contest in 2008, there was a heightened scrutiny of the Minnesota absentee ballot process. Some concerns were expressed about the consistency of the absentee voting process to which reform proposals were offered. However, decisions on whether reform is necessary and, if it is necessary, how to change the system will only be effective if they are carefully grounded in understanding the actual operation of the absentee ballot systems in Minnesota. An accurate understanding of absentee voting requires an understanding of the **entire process**. Individual aspects of absentee voting are critical but the consideration of reform depends upon an appreciation of how the individual components fit together.

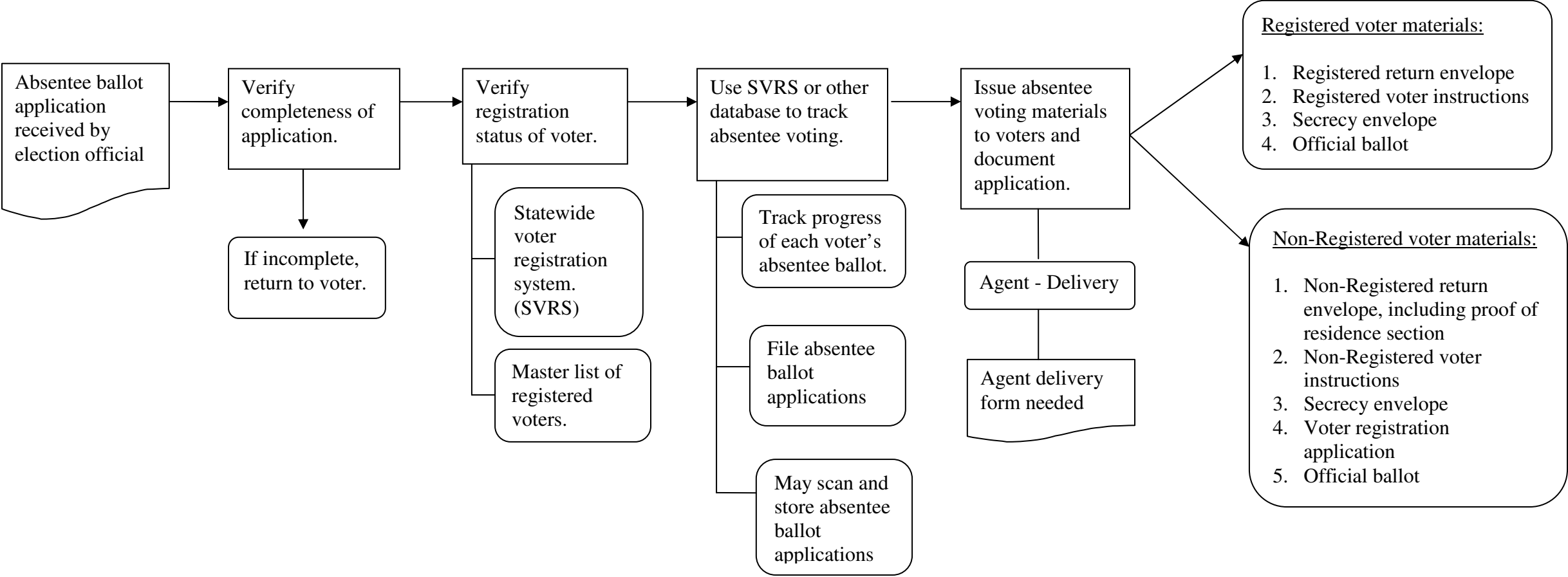
This document consists of a series of flowcharts to illustrate how the entire absentee voting process works currently. Several key observations should be clear. To begin with, there are distinct processes for each stage of absentee voting – obtaining a ballot, casting a ballot, and the review of the ballot to determine if it meets specified requirements. Secondly, there are distinct differences between types of absentee voting – including individuals receiving a domestic absentee ballot to those voting from the military or overseas. Lastly, this process is highly decentralized with the absentee voting process handled entirely at the local level – either by the county, or in some cases, larger cities.

The hope is that this document will help to illustrate and demonstrate the complexity and details of Minnesota’s absentee voting process so that any reform proposals can be carefully grounded on accurate knowledge of the system. This will ultimately be important to guard against unanticipated consequences, misallocation of resources, and to properly balance competing considerations.

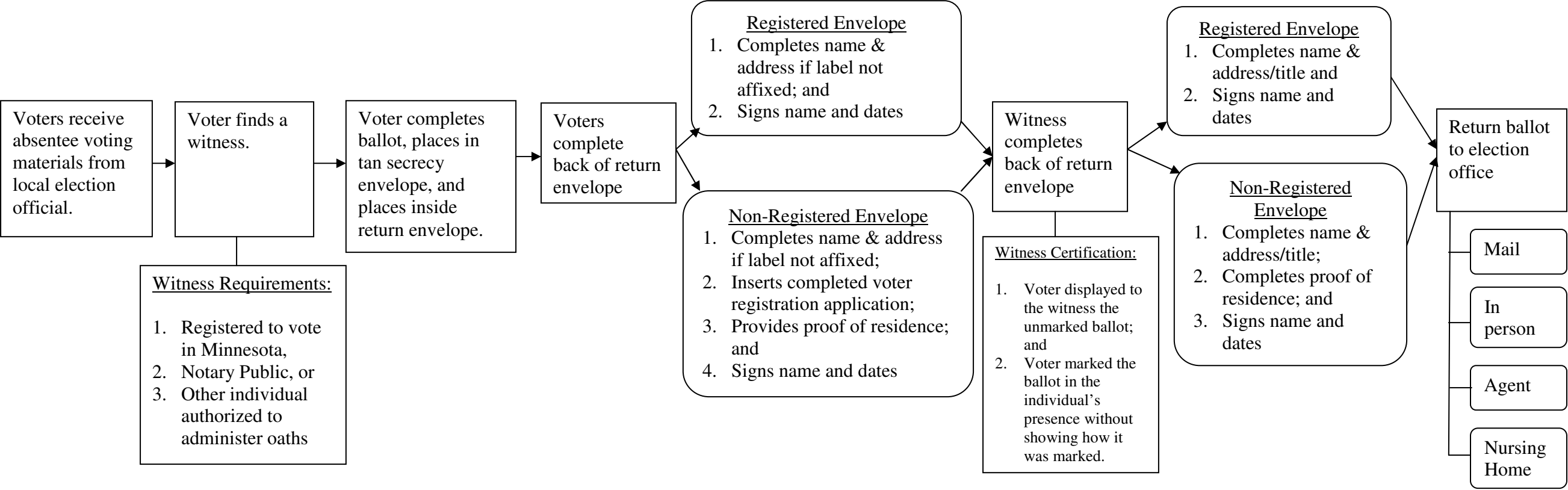
**The absentee ballot application process**



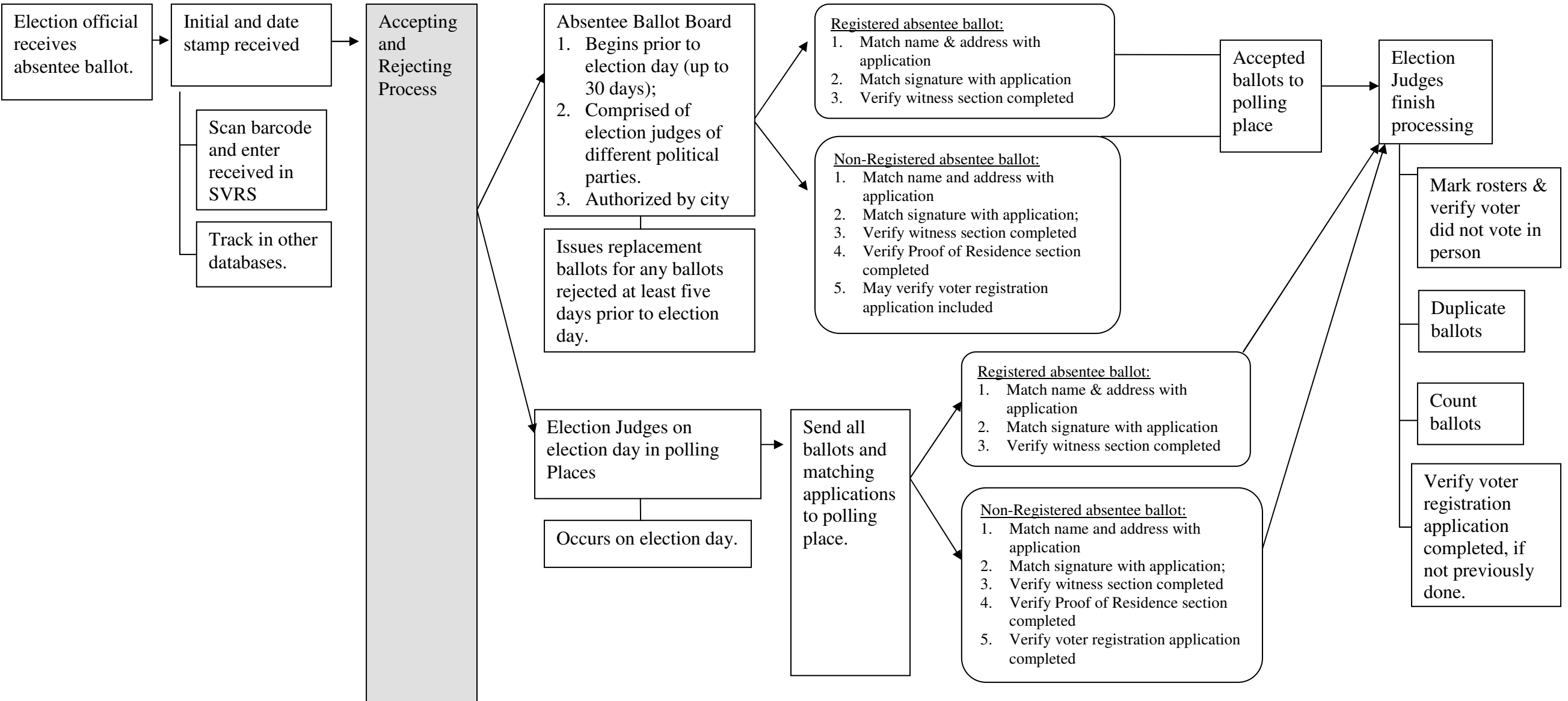
Processing the absentee ballot application by election officials



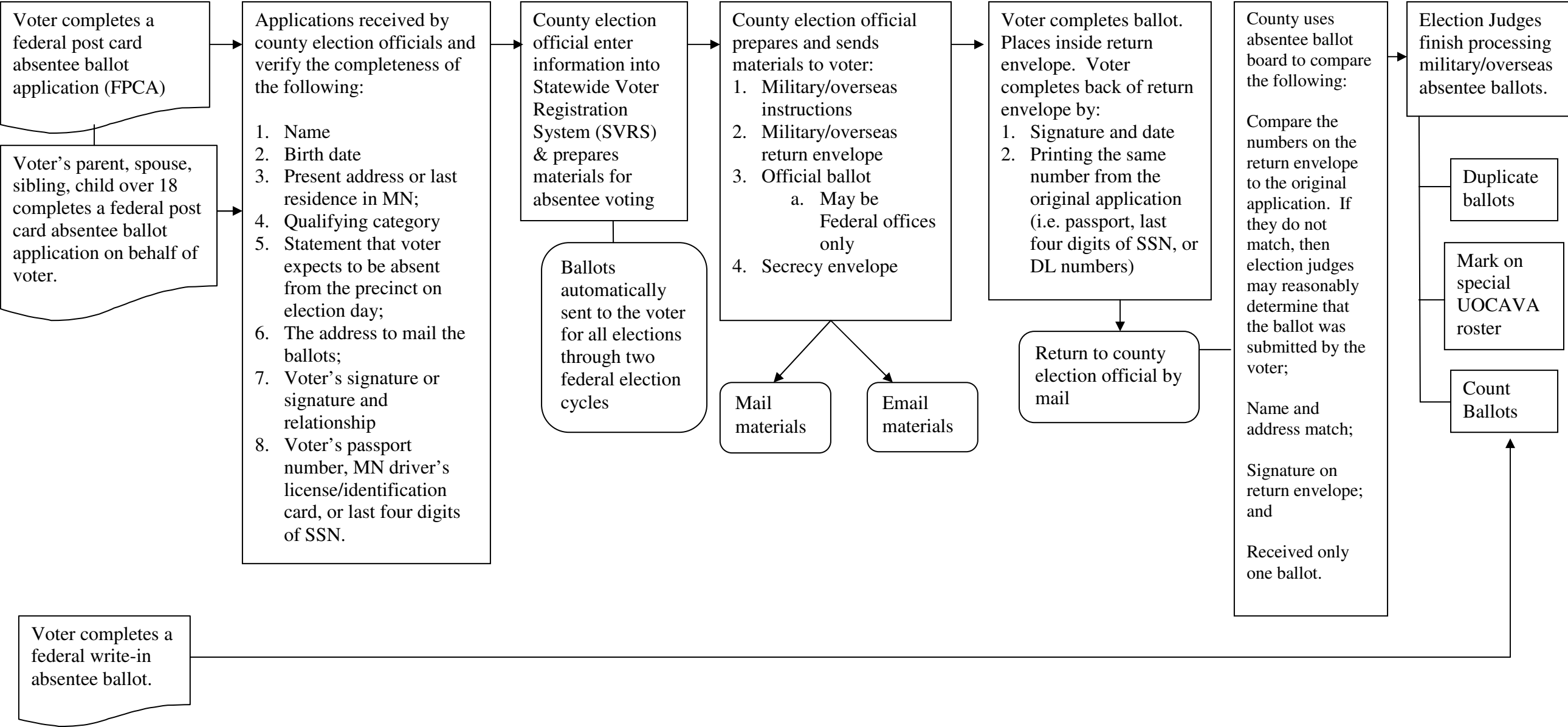
Completing the absentee ballot by the voter & witness



## Processing & Approving the Absentee Ballot



**Military & Overseas Voters**



## **Defined Roles of the Absentee Voting Process**

### **Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State:**

- Design absentee ballot application form
- Design absentee ballot envelopes and instructions
- Program and train on the Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS)
- Conduct county election official training on absentee procedures
- Prepare election judge training video
- Prepare election judge guide

### **County election officials:**

- Administer absentee voting countywide (unless delegated to municipalities)
- Determine internal process for absentee voting
- Administer all military/overseas absentee voting
- Train municipalities and school district election administrators on absentee voting
- Train election judges on absentee voting procedures
- Order and print envelopes, applications
- County Boards authorized to adopt absentee ballot board

### **City & town election officials:**

- Administers absentee ballot (if delegated from county)
- City councils and town boards authorized to adopt absentee ballot board
- Administers absentee voting in odd years for municipal elections
- May train election judges
- Conducts nursing home and hospital absentee voting procedures
- May print absentee ballot applications